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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS:
HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights

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INTRODUCTION

1. Since the previous report of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council (E/1995/112), the High Commissioner has submitted reports to the General Assembly (A/50/36) and the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1996/103) in accordance with his mandate, as specified in General Assembly resolution 48/141. The present report aims to brief the Council on the most important activities undertaken by the High Commissioner since his above-mentioned report to the Commission on Human Rights, copies of which are being made available to the Council.

2. The United Nations human rights programme is developing and being restructured in response to the various and complex mandates that have emerged in the wake of the World Conference on Human Rights, the current challenges of the international human rights agenda, and the demand by Member States for more efficient and effective action in the field of human rights (see the report by the Secretary-General on the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights (A/C.5/50/71)).

3. The Medium-Term Plan crystallizes developments that have taken place since the World Conference on Human Rights and integrates the imperatives of that Conference with the High Commissioner's plan for human rights reform within the context of the evolving needs that have been identified by the international community. As such, the Plan seeks to:

(a) Develop an integrated and multidimensional strategy for the implementation, coordination and promotion of the right to development by facilitating action to be taken by relevant bodies of the United Nations system and other members of the human rights community, as well as international development and financial institutions. The respective subprogramme aims to strengthen analytical capacities to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of human rights issues through research and data collection;

(b) Support the work of United Nations human rights bodies and organs;

(c) Promote and protect human rights through assistance and technical cooperation, provided at the request of States themselves, and support procedures established by the Commission on Human Rights and the human rights presence in the field.

4. The events and activities that are reflected in the present report illustrate the practical implementation of the United Nations human rights programme.

I. FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

5. The Commission on Human Rights held its fifty-second session from 18 March to 26 April 1996; its report is before the Council (E/1996/23). The following are some of the important developments of that session:

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(a) The Commission was opened, for the first time, by the Secretary-General. The enhanced status and prestige of the Commission was also emphasized by the large number of high-level government representatives, including foreign ministers, who attended the fifty-second session, the numerous and active participation of non-governmental organizations, and the close media attention that the event generated;

(b) The debate in the Commission reflected a growing international consensus on human rights issues. The Commission adopted 90 per cent of its resolutions and decisions without a vote. A notable and very encouraging example of the spirit of cooperation that prevailed was the adoption by consensus of Commission resolution 1996/15 on the right to development;

(c) It was noted that the Commission is functioning more and more as an organ that is reacting to the current and more pressing human rights needs around the world. Indeed, the Commission has already held three special sessions, two on former Yugoslavia (1992) and one on Rwanda (1994). And in response to the dramatic information being received from Burundi during its fifty-second session, the Commission decided to hold a special meeting on the human rights situation in that country. Special sessions and meetings provide an opportunity to evaluate specific situations and identify appropriate means for addressing them;

(d) The Commission heard statements from various special rapporteurs, chairpersons of working groups and representatives of treaty-based and other human rights bodies. That fruitful dialogue, which is an important contribution to the work of the Commission, should continue in the future;

(e) Throughout the deliberations of the Commission, there were several expressions of concern on the need to rationalize United Nations human rights machinery, including the Commission itself. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights indicated that he is prepared to support all efforts in that regard. It is encouraging to note that consultations within the Commission achieved some significant progress that may facilitate further endeavours;

(f) The Commission launched preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by adopting a resolution in which, inter alia, it requested the High Commissioner to coordinate system-wide activities to mark the event. The fiftieth anniversary should be a useful forum for reflection and stock-taking of the promotion and protection of human rights in the past and for the future. The High Commissioner is already preparing a programme of activities for the event, which will include wide consultations with States and other interested parties;

(g) In an effort to ensure a predictable source of funding and facilitate proper planning for human rights field activities, the High Commissioner urged States to contribute voluntary funds.

II. THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

6. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has always attached the highest importance to the right to development and he welcomed the consensus that was achieved by the Commission in adopting its resolution 1996/15 on the right to development. He further welcomed the Commission's decision to establish an intergovernmental group of experts to elaborate a strategy for the implementation and promotion of the right to development. The High Commissioner is prepared to provide the group with the necessary support.

7. The High Commissioner has arranged to meet with the executive secretaries of the regional commissions on 17 July 1996 in order to discuss how the United Nations human rights programme and the work of the regional commissions can be mutually reinforcing in order to effectively promote the implementation of the right to development.

8. Also in July 1996, a workshop of the World Bank and of the Office of the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations Secretariat will be held, with the participation of the High Commissioner, at World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C. The workshop will address issues of human rights and sustainable development in the context of cooperation between the two institutions.

9. In November 1996, the High Commissioner will organize in Tunisia a seminar on the right to development, with the participation of development and human rights experts and representatives of national planning agencies. The purpose of the seminar is to elaborate on practical aspects of the implementation of the right to development at the national and international levels.

10. Through these and other activities, the High Commissioner seeks to develop a system-wide approach to the implementation of the right to development by:

- (a) Raising awareness of the right to development among the different United Nations agencies;
- (b) Identifying technical cooperation projects to support the right to development;
- (c) Ensuring that United Nations human rights organs are better aware of the activities of the United Nations agencies with respect to the right to development;
- (d) Cooperating on specific right-to-development projects.

Ultimately, the purpose of this approach is to implement the right to development at the country and international levels and to make the right a reality for individuals everywhere.

III. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S VISIT TO TUNISIA

11. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights paid an official visit to Tunisia from 26 to 29 June 1996. During the visit, he held meetings on human rights issues with the President; the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior and Social Affairs; the Secretary of State for National Solidarity; the President of the High Council for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; parliamentarians; and university professors. The issues raised by the High Commissioner with government officials enshrined the human rights problems in the country, including cases of alleged human rights violations. In addition, he stressed the role of the cooperation by countries with the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights, and encouraged the Government to consider inviting the assistance of special rapporteurs and working groups that could make constructive recommendations for further improvements in the field of human rights. During the meetings held with senior government officials and the visit to the site of a specific project carried out by the Fonds de Solidarité National, the High Commissioner noted that Tunisia has made significant progress in bringing national legislation in line with international human rights standards and in promoting women's and children's rights. He also noted a genuine effort to promote the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The High Commissioner discussed with the representatives of the Government holding an expert meeting in Tunisia on the right to development.

12. The High Commissioner also addressed the regional training course for human rights non-governmental organizations, which had been organized by the Arab Institute for Human Rights, holding meetings with leaders of human rights non-governmental organizations from 13 Arab countries, including the Tunisian League for Human Rights and the Board of the Arab Institute for Human Rights. The High Commissioner agreed to launch, in cooperation and partnership with the Arab Institute, an initiative to establish an Arab network for human rights education in the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. He also expressed his commitment to support a technical cooperation project for strengthening the capacities of human rights non-governmental organizations and members of civil society in the Arab region. The project will be implemented, in cooperation with the Arab Institute, under the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation.

IV. ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD

A. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia

13. The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina commits the parties to ensuring the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms to all persons within their jurisdiction. On various occasions, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has stressed that the protection and promotion of human rights constitute one of the pillars of the peaceful development in this country and the entire region. The High Commissioner visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia from 6 to 11 May 1996. He met with the Heads of State, Prime Ministers and other high-level State representatives, as well as with the representatives of various international organizations active in the field, non-governmental organizations

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and academic institutions. He also reviewed the performance of the United Nations human rights field presence.

14. The High Commissioner continues to support the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the implementation of the three-point programme presented during the Peace Implementing Conference (London, 8 and 9 December 1995), which involves:

(a) Developing and conducting training for international personnel who will be responsible for monitoring and other activities related to human rights;

(b) Making available to the High Representative (responsible for civilian aspects of the peace implementation) a limited number of human rights experts to assist in addressing human rights situations which, because of their complexity, require in-depth knowledge and experience;

(c) Continuing to support the work of the Special Rapporteur and the expert in charge of the special process dealing with missing persons in the former Yugoslavia.

15. The human rights training provides a basic introduction to the human rights aspects of the peace implementation, and in the longer term fosters in-depth understanding of the complexities of human-rights monitoring and investigations. Training has been delivered to the officers of the International Police Task Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 17 January 1996, with positive results. Training for international civilian police in eastern Slavonia has also been provided. The role of the international police in former Yugoslavia is of vital importance. Its officers provide a neutral presence of authority and frequently succeed in resolving potential situations of conflict. In February 1996, an induction briefing was provided to the first group of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors stopping in Vienna on their way to the field. OSCE has requested that further training be postponed until July in view of the current focus of its operation on elections. Training programmes have been tailored to the specific needs and functions of each category of monitors, and have included development of manuals for each target group. The High Commissioner has also declared the availability of the training programme to other international personnel, including the European Commission Monitoring Mission and personnel of the Ombudsman.

16. The United Nations human rights field presence has ensured its full cooperation in the area of human-rights coordination and analysis with the Office of the High Representative. Two highly qualified human rights officers are working closely with the Human Rights Coordination Centre in Sarajevo.

17. The United Nations human rights field presence supports the work of the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Rehn, and the Expert on Missing Persons, Mr. Nowak. Its team of human rights officers is fully engaged in gathering information, reporting on pertinent human rights developments and developing contacts with local authorities. Since the Peace Implementing Conference in London, new offices in Banja Luka, Erdut and Belgrade have been established. Assistance to Ms. Rehn and Mr. Nowak, in accordance with resolution 1996/71 of the Commission on Human Rights and in close coordination with other partners, particularly the

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International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia, includes facilitating the work of forensic experts with the objective of clarifying the fate of the 30,000 missing persons.

18. The High Commissioner observed that although significant progress in the protection of human lives had already been made, there was still enormous work to be done in the field of human rights. Unfortunately, numerous violations of pertinent provisions of the Dayton Accords and serious interference with the enjoyment and exercise of human rights have taken place throughout the region. Practical measures taken by the local authorities very often make it difficult, if not impossible, to ensure the return of refugees and displaced persons. Freedom of movement, freedom of media and the right to residence must be fully respected if the peace process is going to succeed.

19. In the view of the High Commissioner, the international community should continue and reinforce its efforts in the field of human rights to support a new climate of respect for human rights in the war-torn societies of former Yugoslavia. The priorities of the human rights programme should, inter alia, be (a) concrete steps aimed at full compliance by the respective authorities with their obligations under the international human rights standards and with their commitments under the Peace Agreement; (b) strengthening the national capacities for the promotion and protection of human rights; (c) taking a determined position against impunity; (d) establishing a programme for the protection of minorities; (e) carrying out a human rights education campaign; and (f) strengthening the non-governmental organizations community and other parts of civil society. The implementation of the human rights programme will depend on the establishment of a solid financial framework. The international community should be aware that without an effective human rights programme, the future of the positive results already achieved by military, political and economic efforts will be at risk. The High Commissioner reiterated during his visit that his Office was ready, resources permitting, to continue to support all international activities for promoting and protecting human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries of former Yugoslavia. The Secretary-General, in his report to the Security Council of 13 December 1995 (S/1995/1031), stated that activities included in the High Commissioner's programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina would need to be financed by Member States since the United Nations had no resources available at present for that purpose.

B. Abkhazia/Georgia

20. In its resolution 1036 (1996), the Security Council, recognizing the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights for the resolution of problems related to the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, expressed its full support for the elaboration of a concrete programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia, as described in the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, of 2 January 1996 (S/1996/5), and called upon the Abkhazian authorities to cooperate fully with efforts to that end. In his report to the Security Council concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1996/284) of 15 April 1996, the

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Secretary-General presented the outline of such a human rights programme, prepared on the basis of the results achieved by the mission that the High Commissioner had sent to Georgia, including Abkhazia, in February 1996. The programme was endorsed by the Security Council in its Chairman's statement of 25 April 1996. The programme envisages the establishment by the High Commissioner of an office in Sukhumi to follow the human rights situation in the area and develop technical assistance activities. On 25 April 1996, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted decision 115, supporting the OSCE contribution to the Human Rights Office in Sukhumi, which should include the availability of an OSCE human rights officer.

21. To date, the implementation of the programme has been hindered by a lack of financial resources. The High Commissioner has undertaken steps to obtain support from the regular budget and voluntary contributions.

C. Burundi

22. Since his appointment in April 1994, the High Commissioner has been increasingly concerned by and outspoken about the deterioration of the situation of human rights in Burundi, and has devoted significant efforts to the mobilization of the international community on behalf of Burundi. In close consultation with the Government of Burundi, he opened an office in Bujumbura in June 1994, which has since then been mainly active in the field of technical assistance and promotion of human rights among various groups of Burundi society.

23. In its resolution 1995/90, the Commission on Human Rights created the post of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi, and expressed its conviction of the need to further increase preventive action, in particular through the presence of human rights experts and observers throughout the country. However, no funds were provided for the deployment of human rights observers until the beginning of 1996.

24. In April and May 1996, the first group of five human rights officers was deployed in Burundi. The main task entrusted to the first observers was to undertake an in-depth study of their observation mission and of actions to be taken in the extremely difficult context that currently characterizes Burundi, and to determine the extent to which it may be possible to envisage the deployment of an increased number of human rights observers throughout the country and to establish regional offices outside the capital. Their evaluation report will provide the basis on which the human rights field presence in Burundi should be extended.

25. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi, Mr. Pinheiro (Brazil), submitted his first report (including an addendum), which was based on two missions to Burundi from 21 June-2 July 1995 and from 9-16 January 1996, to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-second session. The Special Rapporteur intends to conduct a third mission to Burundi in July 1996. In his first report and subsequent addendum, the Special Rapporteur made it clear that the situation in Burundi was continuing to

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deteriorate significantly and that a smouldering civil war was spreading further in the country.

26. For its part, since the substantive session of 1995 of the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council has remained seized of the question of Burundi, on the basis of regular reports or correspondence submitted to it by the Secretary-General.

D. Rwanda

27. In its first 12 months of operation, the Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda (HRFOR) was able to establish a good working relationship with the Government of Rwanda at various levels, which is essential for effective monitoring of the current human rights situation. In October 1995, HRFOR entered its second year of operation. On that occasion, the High Commissioner took the opportunity to review the progress of the Operation in regard to all aspects of its mandate. At that time, the newly appointed Chief of HRFOR undertook a thorough revision of HRFOR monitoring and reporting procedures to ensure that the Government of Rwanda was kept fully involved, consistently and regularly, as well as to allow it to respond more fully to allegations of human rights violations and to work more constructively with HRFOR to redress them at all levels.

28. From the beginning of the operation, HRFOR has made special efforts to provide the Special Rapporteur with the required assistance in the fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to him by the Commission on Human Rights. The Special Rapporteur receives special assistance from a coordinator in the field, appointed in conformity with his wishes, and from two full-time professional officers based in Geneva.

29. With the withdrawal of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda on 8 March 1996, HRFOR has become the largest United Nations presence in Rwanda. It is therefore essential that the international community stand behind its commitment to the Government and people of Rwanda to ensure, through the Office of the High Commissioner, the full implementation of the HRFOR mandate to investigate past violations of international humanitarian law and human rights; monitor current violations of human rights; provide technical assistance and advisory services for rebuilding the administration of justice to enable the effective prosecution of individuals for past human rights violations, including genocide; address the serious situation in prisons and local detention centres (population over 74,000 as of June 1996); and provide effective confidence-building measures in order to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons and enable the rebuilding of civil society.

30. Unlike other human rights field activities, such as those in Haiti, Guatemala, Cambodia and El Salvador, HRFOR has never had the benefit of either assessed contributions or peace-keeping funds. The request made by the High Commissioner to the General Assembly for regular budget funding (see A/50/743, annex) was not approved. Although several contributions of a significant amount from many countries and organizations and special assistance from the European Union were received by HRFOR, the financial situation remains unstable.

Therefore, the High Commissioner remains convinced that regular budget funding is needed to put the operation on a more stable footing and avoid many unnecessary administrative and logistical problems.

E. Zaire

31. Pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/69 on the situation of human rights in Zaire, the High Commissioner sent several missions to Kinshasa to finalize an agreement between the Government of Zaire and the United Nations to allow the establishment of a human rights office in Zaire.

32. During the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights, the High Commissioner met with the Zairian delegation, headed by the Minister of Justice, and presented a consolidated version of the agreement, taking into account observations made by the Government of Zaire. The Minister of Justice indicated that the signature might take place before the end of the fifty-second session of the Commission. However, the agreement was not finalized and the Commission, in its resolution 1996/77, strongly regretted that the Government of Zaire has not yet signed the agreement for the establishment of an office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kinshasa.

33. By letter dated 11 June 1996, the High Commissioner renewed his offer to the Government of Zaire to assist it in complying with the resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights.

F. South Africa

34. In September 1995, the Government of South Africa invited the Centre for Human Rights to undertake a needs assessment survey with a view to providing technical assistance to South Africa in the field of human rights. At the time of the invitation, the Centre was already involved in developing a project in South Africa in order to assist Fort Hare University, the nation's oldest historically black university, to launch a human rights resource Centre. The three-week high-level assessment mission was conducted by the Centre for Human Rights in March 1995. The mission met with a wide range of government officials, ministers, departmental staff, non-governmental organizations, community groups and foreign donors.

35. On the basis of the mission's findings, a comprehensive project of assistance has been developed, with a particular focus on economic, social and cultural rights, to provide expertise to key institutions, including the Human Rights Commission, the Land Department, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Safety and Security, for developing an institutional capacity for planning, implementing, managing and evaluating policies, strategies and training programmes for the protection and promotion of human rights, affirmative action policies, and plans of action and coordination of external assistance. The overall development objective is to contribute to the realization of all human rights and the elimination of inequality and the consequences of past discrimination in South Africa. Implementation of the project is expected to commence in the second half of 1996.

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V. THIRD MEETING OF SPECIAL RAPORTEURS/REPRESENTATIVES/
EXPERTS AND CHAIRMEN OF WORKING GROUPS OF THE
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OF THE ADVISORY
SERVICES PROGRAMME

36. The Third Annual Meeting of Special Rapporteurs/Representatives/Experts and Chairmen of Working Groups of the Commission on Human Rights was held from 28 to 30 May 1996. In accordance with the recommendations adopted at the Second Meeting, the following items were under consideration: cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights; format, length and deadlines for reports; assessment of progress made in achieving mandated objectives; coordination between the special procedures system and treaty bodies; the problem of the relationship between terrorist activities and human rights in the context of participants' mandates; integrating the rights of women; administrative questions, including budgetary issues.

37. In his opening statement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights referred to the profound transformations envisaged within the Centre for Human Rights for improving the quality of information, the efficiency of support and the effectiveness of actions. He described various initiatives that he had undertaken during the previous year to help enhance coordination and cooperation between the participants and his office, and recalled the first coordination meeting he had convened in Geneva with the three special rapporteurs of the Great Lakes region, as well as contacts that he had made with other United Nations bodies, in particular development and financial institutions. He also referred to various steps that he had taken to implement recommendations made at prior meetings of the participants.

38. The participants attached great attention to the follow-up to their recommendations as holders of mandates. They requested the High Commissioner that a study be carried out on the conditions under which he could intervene with a given country to facilitate the implementation of their recommendations.

39. The participants stressed the importance of coordination among the various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system dealing with human rights issues, including the exchange of information between the High Commissioner and the holders of mandates, on the one hand, and that among holders of mandates themselves, on the other. The High Commissioner informed them that under the new structure of the Centre that question would be definitively solved. Some participants expressed the view that recent developments concerning the establishment of human rights field offices were an important advance in the response to human rights violations, and they also stressed the need for a clear division of labour between field offices and the holders of mandates.

40. The meeting requested the High Commissioner to keep the Secretary-General, and through him the General Assembly and the Security Council, apprised of the activities of the holders of mandates. On the proposal of the High Commissioner, it was suggested that the Chairman of the Meeting meet annually with the Secretary-General.

41. The participants expressed great appreciation for the opportunity to exchange views and ideas with the Chairman of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights, Ambassador Gilberto Vergne Saboia, who attended the Meeting. The participants again reiterated that a 32-page limit for their reports could not be countenanced by special rapporteurs because such limits undermined their role and effectiveness in carrying out their mandates.

42. The participants had the opportunity to discuss problems related to cooperation with Mrs. Akila Belembaogo, the Chairperson of the Meeting of Persons Chairing Human Rights Treaty Bodies. It was stressed that coordination between treaty bodies and special rapporteurs/representatives/experts and working groups should be further increased, especially with regard to urgent actions.

43. Gender-specific analysis was deemed particularly important in evaluating and making recommendations concerning remedies to human rights violations. The view was expressed that country reports should develop gender-specific methodologies for monitoring and reporting on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

44. The participants received a draft manual for special rapporteurs/representatives/experts and chairmen of working groups of the Commission on Human Rights. Their comments will be taken into account in the preparation of the final version.

VI. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

45. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, together with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, participated in the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996). The High Commissioner, in his statement to the Conference, raised the human rights aspects of the issue of housing, and focused on the adherence of the final document to the established human rights standards. He recalled that the right to adequate housing has been recognized since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and enumerated the activities of the human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms dealing with the right. Most of the comments made by the Office of the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights on the right to adequate housing were integrated in the final document of the Conference. The High Commissioner also chaired a round table, with the participation of experts on the human right to adequate housing.

46. The Office of the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/157, organized a ceremony during the Conference to celebrate and reflect upon the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004). The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, in his capacity as the Coordinator of the Decade, made an introductory statement, while many delegations participated in the debate. A round table was also organized on the theme "Indigenous people, shelter and land", which was chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, with the participation of experts in the field.

47. The Office of the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights participated in the hearings involving representatives of the United Nations system concerning the strategy for implementing the Habitat Agenda. In this context, it was stated that the right to adequate housing has been integrated into the overall activities of human rights. Specific proposals were made on applying human rights strategies to the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Habitat Agenda, taking into account the coordinating role of the High Commissioner in the field of human rights.

VII. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONFERENCE ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES,
DISPLACED PERSONS AND RELATED MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS IN
THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES AND RELEVANT
NEIGHBOURING STATES

48. The Conference on Refugees, Returnees, Displaced Persons and Related Migratory Movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States, which was organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and OSCE (Geneva, 30 and 31 May 1996), should also have a substantial impact on the human rights situation in interested countries. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights have participated in and contributed to the overall process of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Conference ever since it started in January 1995. The High Commissioner/Centre maintained a close working relation with the CIS secretariat by sharing their expertise and providing background materials, as well as making contributions in the area of human rights and on the specific issues of forced displacement.

49. Throughout the process, in particular at Drafting Committee meetings, contributions were made to ensure that commitments undertaken under international human rights and humanitarian law standards were accurately reflected in the final document of the Conference. Particular emphasis was placed on making sure that (a) the restatement of the law did not reduce the level of protection already provided in international instruments and customary law; and (b) the approved principles were applied to all the relevant groups of concern to the Conference, including other groups in addition to recognized refugees under the family reunification regime, applying the broad definition of internally displaced persons, as utilized in the United Nations framework. The United Nations human rights programme will contribute to the implementation of the programme of action adopted by the above-mentioned CIS Conference.

VIII. IMPACT OF SYSTEM-WIDE SAVINGS MEASURES ON THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME

50. The 1996-1997 biennium budget of the human rights programme approved by the General Assembly represented the minimum necessary in order to carry out mandated activities. However, in February 1996, in the framework of the system-wide savings measures, the resources available from the regular budget had to be reduced by US\$ 2.6 million in both post and non-post items, a reduction by approximately 6 per cent of the approved budget. Furthermore, a

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vacancy rate of 6.4 per cent is to be maintained in both the staff of the Professional and General Service categories. Although those measures cannot remain without negative implications for the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights, serious efforts are being made, also in the framework of the ongoing restructuring to minimize their negative impact on the capacity of action. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the capability of the human rights programme depends on an adequate and reliable mix of regular budget resources and voluntary contributions from Governments and private entities.

51. The High Commissioner has been charged with a very broad mandate, the implementation of which, particularly concerning country projects, depends to a large extent on voluntary sources. In his report to the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1996/103), the High Commissioner stressed that the ever-growing demand on his Office/Centre to engage in such areas as confidence-building measures, technical cooperation, education, observation and monitoring cannot be satisfied by regular-budget funding, so that other sources must be tapped. The High Commissioner consistently appeals to Member States and others to contribute generously to his endeavours in the field, which should represent an alliance of efforts. In keeping with current requirements, the amount necessary to cover such a field presence would be some US\$ 25 million per year. Several countries, including a number of developing countries, expressed great interest in making voluntary contributions to support human rights field activities.
